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PREDICTIONS RELATING TO THE ANNULAR ECLIPSE OF THE SUN, JUNE 6, 1891.

The following data, additional to those already given on page 67, may be useful. *Position angle of the points of first and last contact* (counted from N. through E.)

For Mt. Hamilton; *first* 288° 19′; *last* 28° 56′,
For San Francisco; *first* 287° 18′; *last* 30° 16′.

J. M. S.

UNITED STATES NAVAL OBSERVATORY.

From the Report of the Superintendent (Captain F. V. McNAIR, U. S. Navy) for 1890 the following paragraph is extracted:

> "PERSONNEL.
>
> "Out of the corps of twelve professors of mathematics in the Navy, there are now only six who are on duty as astronomers; one of the ablest of these will be retired shortly, leaving but five for service at the Observatory and Nautical Almanac Office. * * * The issuing of the annual volumes of the observatory has been for years falling farther and farther behind, until now publication is five years behind the observations, and the amount of work done has been growing less and less. Important improvements in instruments and in methods of observation, as well as new and equally important lines of research, many of which are actively pushed forward at the principal Government observatories, have here been entirely neglected on account of the lack of practical astronomers to make independent observations and to carry on special investigations in conjunction with other observatories. * * *
>
> "From the organization of this naval institution, its personnel must be drawn principally from officers of the Navy; and it is necessary to appoint some professors of mathematics, astronomers of known experience, as it is mainly to this corps that the observatory has to look for aid to keep up its astronomical reputation.
>
> "It is scarcely necessary to add that, when the new Naval Observatory is completed and equipped, the force of astronomers and assistant astronomers will have to be materially increased if the observatory is to be worthy of our great and progressive country."

The Government Observatory ought to be the chief astronomical establishment of the country and equal to any similar institution in the world. For some years past it has been falling behind its true rank, as is pointed out by the Superintendent. A fine observatory building is nearly completed and, in a short time, the instruments will be transferred to their new home. For every reason it is desirable that some change of policy should mark the beginning of the new epoch, and that the observatory should take its legitimate place at the head of astronomical science in America. There is no reason why this cannot be done (nor in fact is there any good reason why it should have lost that position). To take its proper place its astronomical effort must be directed by a competent astronomer.

It is a matter for consideration whether the astronomical head shall be also the official chief or not. One thing is essential and that is, that there shall be one astronomical head and only one, and that he shall have command of sufficient money to insure that the instruments are in perfect working order, that the observations are properly made, quickly reduced, adequately discussed and promptly printed. The chief astronomer will require the aid of four or five heads of departments (The Meridian Service, The Equatorial Service, The Photographic Service, The Magnetic and Meteorological Service, The Computing Bureau) who must be specialists of distinction. These, again, must be assisted by younger astronomers and specialists of ability and of skill, who see such a future before them as will attach them to the service and induce them to give their lives to it. Fifteen or twenty such assistants of various grades will be needed. Such an organization as this will place the observatory where it should be, and no other one will.

It is a source of the deepest satisfaction to all well-wishers of the Naval Observatory that the present Superintendent has expressed so clearly his judgment on this fundamental point. He says "it is mainly to (astronomers of known experience) that the observatory has to look for aid to keep up its astronomical reputation." This is Gospel Truth. There is no other way. If this method is adopted the country will have a central observatory to be proud of. If any of the old timid or temporizing methods are tried once more we shall once more have the unsatisfactory and inadequate results. We shall not only have them, but we shall richly deserve them. The Superintendent can count on the efficient support of the astronomers of the country in his efforts for reform in this direction, and so long as the main principle is kept in view, matters of detail go for little.

EDWARD S. HOLDEN.